



United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit

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### NEWS RELEASE

June 4, 2007

## Ninth Circuit Hosts Asian Pacific American Heritage Event, Exhibit

**SAN FRANCISCO** – The Northern California legal community met recently at the James R. Browning United States Courthouse here to look back at major court cases having significant legal and social impacts on Asian Americans.

The May 30 event, part of the celebration of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, was sponsored by the Northern California Chapter of the Federal Bar Association, the Asian American Bar Association of the Greater Bay Area, the Ninth Judicial Circuit Historical Society and the Northern District of California Historical Society.

The highlight of the evening was a panel discussion of key cases heard in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, and ultimately decided by the Supreme Court of the United States. Serving as panelists were Magistrate Judge Edward M. Chen of the Northern District; attorneys Karen Kai of the Korematsu Coram Nobis Team, and Malcom Yeung of the Asian Law Caucus; and professor Edward H. Steinman of the Santa Clara University School of Law. Cases discussed included:

*Yick Wo v. Hopkins*, an 1886 case in which the conviction of a Chinese laundry owner under a San Francisco ordinance was reversed because the ordinance was administered in a discriminatory fashion;

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*Panelists, above, discuss cases having significant legal and social impacts on Asian Americans. "Remembering 1882," below, a traveling exhibit sponsored by the Chinese Historical Society of America.*



*Korematsu v. U.S.*, a 1944 case upholding the conviction of a California man who sought to evade the government's internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. Under a rare legal procedure known as writ of error *coram nobis* (Latin for *error before us*), Fred T. Korematsu's conviction was vacated by the district court in 1984. Ms. Kai served on the legal team that achieved this extraordinary vindication.

*Lau v. Nichols*, the 1974 case that led to bilingual education in the United States involved Chinese students in San Francisco. Professor Steinman argued the case on behalf of Lau; and

*Wong v. Hampton*, a 1976 case which declared unconstitutional a Civil Service Commission regulation barring non-citizens, including lawfully admitted resident aliens, from employment in the federal competitive civil service.

Also as part the heritage month observance, the Browning Courthouse recently hosted a traveling exhibit marking the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chinese Exclusion Act, the first law to bar entry of an ethnic group on the premise that it endangered certain localities.

The exhibit, entitled "Remembering 1882," is a set of eight panels exploring the historical debate over the 1882 Exclusion Act, the nation's first immigration legislation. The panels follow the law from its origins through its full repeal in 1968, the civil rights struggle of Chinese Americans and their allies, and the historic importance of habeas corpus in the Chinese American community. The traveling exhibit is sponsored by the Chinese Historical Society of America, which is based in San Francisco. Further information is available online at [www.remembering1882.org](http://www.remembering1882.org).

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